

record. The presiding official shall issue a written report of all findings of fact to the debarring official within 30 days after the record of the fact-finding proceeding closes.

§ 890.1029 Deciding a contest after a fact-finding proceeding.

(a) *Findings shall be accepted.* The debarring official shall accept the presiding official's findings of fact, unless they are arbitrary, capricious, or clearly erroneous. If the debarring official concludes that the factual findings are not acceptable, they may be remanded to the presiding official for additional proceedings in accordance with § 890.1028.

(b) *Timeframe for final decision.* The debarring official shall issue a final written decision on a contest within 30 days after receiving the presiding official's findings. The debarring official may extend this decision period for good cause.

(c) *Debarring official's final decision.* (1) The debarring official shall observe the evidentiary standards and burdens of proof stated in § 890.1024 in reaching a final decision.

(2) In any case where a final decision is made to debar a provider, the debarring official has the discretion to set the period of debarment, subject to the factors identified in §§ 890.1016 through 1021.

(3) The debarring official has the discretion to decide not to impose debarment in any case involving a permissive debarment authority.

(d) *No further administrative proceedings.* No further administrative proceedings shall be conducted after the debarring official's final decision in a contest involving an additional fact-finding hearing. A provider adversely affected by the debarring official's final decision in a contested case may appeal under 5 U.S.C. 8902a(h)(2) to the appropriate U. S. district court.

SUSPENSION

§ 890.1030 Effect of a suspension.

(a) *Temporary action pending formal proceedings.* Suspension is a temporary action pending completion of an investigation or ensuing criminal, civil, or administrative proceedings.

(b) *Immediate effect.* Suspension is effective immediately upon the suspending official's decision, without prior notice to the provider.

(c) *Effect equivalent to debarment.* The effect of a suspension is the same as the effect of a debarment. A suspended provider may not receive payment from FEHBP funds for items or services furnished to FEHBP-covered persons while suspended.

§ 890.1031 Grounds for suspension.

(a) *Basis for suspension.* OPM may suspend a provider if:

(1) OPM obtains reliable evidence indicating that one of the grounds for suspension listed in paragraph (b) of this section applies to the provider; and

(2) The suspending official determines under paragraph (c) of this section that immediate action to suspend the provider is necessary to protect the health and safety of persons covered by FEHBP.

(b) *Grounds for suspension.* Evidence constituting grounds for a suspension may include, but is not limited to:

(1) Indictment or conviction of a provider for a criminal offense that is a basis for mandatory debarment under this subpart;

(2) Indictment or conviction of a provider for a criminal offense that reflects a risk to the health, safety, or well-being of FEHBP-covered individuals;

(3) Other credible evidence indicating, in the judgment of the suspending official, that a provider has committed a violation that would warrant debarment under this subpart. This may include, but is not limited to:

(i) Civil judgments;

(ii) Notice that a Federal, State, or local government agency has debarred, suspended, or excluded a provider from participating in a program or revoked or declined to renew a professional license; or

(iii) Other official findings by Federal, State, or local bodies that determine factual or legal matters.

(c) *Determining need for immediate action.* Suspension is intended to protect the public interest, including the health and safety of covered individuals or the integrity of FEHBP funds.

§ 890.1032

The suspending official has wide discretion to decide whether to suspend a provider. A specific finding of immediacy or necessity is not required to issue a suspension. The suspending official may draw reasonable inferences from the nature of the alleged misconduct and from a provider's actual or potential transactions with the FEHBP.

§ 890.1032 Length of suspension.

(a) *Initial period.* The initial term of all suspensions shall be an indefinite period not to exceed 12 months.

(b) *Formal legal proceedings not initiated.* If formal legal or administrative proceedings have not begun against a provider within 12 months after the effective date of his suspension, the suspending official may:

(1) Terminate the suspension; or

(2) If requested by the Department of Justice, the cognizant United States Attorney's Office, or other responsible Federal, State, or local prosecuting official, extend the suspension for an additional period, not to exceed 6 months.

(c) *Formal proceedings initiated.* If formal criminal, civil, or administrative proceedings are initiated against a suspended provider, the suspension may continue indefinitely, pending the outcome of those proceedings.

(d) *Terminating the suspension.* The suspending official may terminate a suspension at any time, and shall terminate it after 18 months, unless formal proceedings have begun within that period.

§ 890.1033 Notice of suspension.

(a) *Written notice.* OPM shall send written notice of suspension according to the procedures and methods described in § 890.1006(c)–(f).

(b) *Contents of notice.* The suspension notice shall contain information indicating that:

(1) The provider has been suspended, effective on the date of the notice;

(2) The initial period of the suspension;

(3) The basis for the suspension;

(4) The provisions of law and regulation authorizing the suspension;

(5) The effect of the suspension; and

(6) The provider's rights to contest the suspension.

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§ 890.1034 Counting a period of suspension as part of a subsequent debarment.

The debarring official may consider the provider's contiguous period of suspension when determining the length of a debarment.

§ 890.1035 Provider contests of suspensions.

(a) *Filing a contest of the suspension.* A provider may challenge a suspension by filing a contest, in writing, with the suspending official not later than 30 days after receiving notice of suspension. The suspension shall remain in effect during the contest, unless rescinded by the suspending official.

(b) *Informal proceeding.* The suspending official shall use informal, flexible procedures to conduct the contest. Formal rules of evidence and procedure do not apply to this proceeding.

§ 890.1036 Information considered in deciding a contest.

(a) *Presenting information and arguments to the suspending official.* A provider may submit documents and written arguments in opposition to the suspension, and may appear personally, or through a representative, before the suspending official to provide any other relevant information.

(b) *Specific factual basis for contesting the suspension.* The provider shall identify specific facts that contradict the basis for the suspension as stated in the suspension notice. A general denial of the basis for suspension does not raise a genuine dispute over facts material to the suspension, and the suspending official shall not give such a denial any probative weight.

(c) *Mandatory disclosures.* Any provider contesting a suspension shall disclose the items of information set forth in § 890.1023(c). Failure to provide such information completely and accurately may be a basis for OPM to initiate further legal or administrative action against the provider.

§ 890.1037 Cases where additional fact-finding is not required.

The suspending official may decide a contest without an additional fact-finding process if: